

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DREIER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. MCCOTTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCCOTTER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to come before the House once again. As you know, the 30-Something Working Group comes to the floor every week to discuss issues that are at the forefront of what is going on in the country, and there are a lot of good things that are happening here under the Capitol dome on behalf of the American people.

As you know, many times we focus on the issue of Iraq, and just to continue to keep the Congress focused on that very issue, and also to keep the American people tuned in on what is happening, as of March 4, 2008, total deaths in Iraq, U.S. casualties, are 3,973; total number of wounded in action and returned to duty is 16,211; and the total number of wounded in action when not returning to duty is 13,109.

As we look at these issues and continue to focus on trying to get out of Iraq more sooner than later, I definitely want the Members to continue to focus on the sacrifice that many of our men and women are carrying out on a daily basis, and their families, I must add.

Just a case in point, Mr. Speaker, just yesterday I returned. I went to the opening of the Florida legislature. Be-

cause of bad weather, I ended up finding myself traveling through Atlanta, and I ended up getting here late yesterday evening. There was a soldier on the plane with us, and I noticed him sitting a couple of seats up ahead of me. I didn't have the opportunity to have a discussion with him. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I always enjoy talking to our men and women in uniform.

He was ahead of me. When he came out of the gate there at the Delta terminal, there were about 30 of his family members there that were just happy to see him. Tears and prayers being answered for this young man coming back home. I understand he is from Virginia.

I did have the opportunity, I had one of my congressional coins in my computer bag, and I had the opportunity to shake his hand after 5 minutes of celebration from his family. Many of them were thanking God for his return. This kind of love is really, if one was to use biblical terms, almost close to agape love, the fact that family members had an opportunity to see their son, nephew and father and husband return back.

I think we should have the resolve every day, even on weekends, to figure out how we can bring our men and women home. I personally don't have a close relative or family member that is in theater right now, be it in Iraq or Afghanistan, but I want the Members to keep the conscience of those that do have individuals that are in harm's way.

There are a number of families on military bases, a number of families that are in subdivisions and communities. There are young people that their fathers and mothers were members of the Army Reserve and members of the National Guard that have their family or their father that is serving in Iraq.

Even though we see more peaceful days in Iraq and we don't see the political achievement that the Iraqi Government was supposed to make, I still want to share with the Members of how long can we keep that peace, and at what cost, not only in life but in U.S. taxpayer dollars.

As we talk about infrastructure issues here in this country, as we talk about the economy in this country, in Iraq we are financing new infrastructure for the Iraqi people. Here, in the United States, we still have crumbling bridges, projects that are still on the drawing board to be carried out, and they are not being carried out.

So as we get into this big discussion with the White House over the budget, as we have the debates in committees, I just want every Member, Democrat and Republican, to think about those that are living in the real world that are looking forward to a celebration that I witnessed last night.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about rebuilding our

economy and the economic forum on Wednesday that the House Democratic leaders hosted, our second economic forum, the forum which convened national experts on economic and financial issues. It will address the state of America's economy. I think as we look at this whole New Direction Congress, it's important that we look at that we have already passed a bipartisan stimulus package that wasn't all that it should have been or all that it could have been, if I can say that, but it was something. I know that we are going to be working very hard to do even more. It will help create 500,000 American jobs. The plan was targeted as a temporary fix to allow rebates for those families that are most at risk in this bad economy, in this bad economic turnaround. I think later this spring, the recovery rebates put hundreds of dollars, up to \$600 per individual and \$1,200 per married couple, plus a \$300 tax credit in the hands of more than 30 million Americans. That is a bipartisan piece of legislation, and I think that it's very, very important that we continue to march in that direction.

I also think that it's important that when we look at these record oil prices and we look at some of the things that we are pushing for here on the House floor, and as we work on the Senate side, I think it's important that the Bush administration works with us as we continue to rebuild this economy. Many of the Presidential candidates are out there talking about different proposals, different packages. But I can tell you right now, there's a lot of work to be done, Mr. Speaker and Members, until that actually takes place.

I know that the American people are building a lot of hope and enthusiasm around this very issue of the economy, and there are many States that are voting now that are looking at this as a primary action that they would like to see take place.

As we also start looking at the economy, we have to also pay attention to what some U.S. families are going through these days. For many of them, it used to be an unaccepted practice to even purchase a car if you couldn't pay for it in cash. It was almost an unaccepted practice to use your credit card to pay your light bill or to buy food at the grocery store. We are having more Americans that are doing that now.

More credit card companies are sending many of our constituents credit cards at very, very low interest rates at the beginning, and then 6 months later, kicking in a number of penalties that they are going to have to pay. I think it's important that we keep our eyes on this very issue.

This bipartisan feeling and structure that we have here on the floor that we built with the economic stimulus package will also help us offer a new long-